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INORGANIC NATURE IN THE POEM OF JOB.

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The following study does not include all the uses of the respective Hebrew words, in the book of Job, but only those in which there is decided reference to some natural substance or operation. It is believed that all such passages have been considered and treated. We begin with phenomena belonging to the region of the atmosphere.

Winds. We have twenty-one allusions counting parallelisms. The common word is *ruah* which appears ten times (10). There are also terms for "east wind," "violent, shaking wind," "whirlwind," "the north wind," "south wind." Of the winds as natural phenomena, the poet has the following range of ideas: they are mobile and often violent; they clear the sky of clouds (26: 13). "By his breath are the heavens made bright," (Gilbert's trans.) (37: 21). They are subject to law (28: 35); they come from the wilderness (1: 19); from the place of the dawn (38: 24); they blow from north and south bringing cold and heat (37: 9; 37: 17). The figurative use is copious. They are a symbol of vain or rash speech (6: 26; 8: 2; 15: 2), and of calamity (9: 17; 21: 18; 27: 20, 21; 30: 15, 22). Note especially Job's complaint of God in 9: 17, "For he breaketh me with a tempest," and in 30: 22, "Thou liftest me up to the wind, thou causest me to ride upon it, and thou dissolvest me in the storm."*

Clouds. The allusions are numerous, and show much observational and poetic power. The words of which there are five suggest the ideas of "covering with darkness," "veiling the heavens," "thin, light cloud," "gathering of clouds," "thick clouds." The clouds hold water without breaking 26: 8; they also appear as a reservoir and source of moisture (in 36: 28; 37: 11; 38: 34). They are high (20: 6; 35: 5†),

* The renderings are those of the Revised Version, unless otherwise stated.

† Cf. Ruskin's fine description of the upper cloud regions, Essay on Clouds.

They are distributed, poised, and numbered (36: 29; 37: 16; 38: 37). Still further, poetically, and in harmony with the Hebrew cosmography, the clouds mantle God's throne (26: 9); and so (attributed to Job by Eliphaz) prevent God from seeing human conduct (22: 13, 14). They are illumined with God's light (37: 11, 15), and form the garment of the sea (38: 9). They appear very naturally as an emblem of dissolution (7: 9), and of vanishing prosperity (30: 15).

Rain. The words are five in number. Besides the ordinary term for rain we find "shower," "pouring rain," and "latter," or "spring rain." The poet uses rain chiefly as an illustration of God's power or decree (5: 10; 28: 26; 36: 27; 37: 6; 38: 26, 28). In 36: 27, the common version has, "He maketh small the drops of water;" the revision, "He draweth up the drops of water." It has thus been thought that the writer fully understood the now familiar cycle of evaporation and precipitation. The word (*gara'*), however, does not mean "to draw up," but "to scrape off," "to take away," the probable thought being that God draws off the fine drops from the cloud mass above. The poet's general conformity to the notions of his time, as well as the second member of the parallelism, strengthens this view, which is Davidson's,* and Gilbert's.† We give the latter's rendering of two vivid lines in Job's fine description of the poor who suffer at the hands of the wicked (24: 8).

"They drip with the rain of the mountains,
And shelterless cling to a rock."

The severity and chill of the mountain storms must have been well known to the poet. Rain is used once as figurative of severe judgment (20: 23); and of Job's refreshing speech, for which men waited eagerly in his prosperous days (29: 23). The poem has two references to the dew, in 29: 19, as a beautiful symbol of vitality,

"My root is spread out to the waters
And the dew lieth all night upon my branch."

and in 38: 28, as begotten in mystery. Hail is once noticed as kept in Jehovah's storehouses (38: 22).

* *Cambridge Bible*, Job, in loc.

† "*The Poetry of Job*," with rhythmical translation by Professor George H. Gilbert, Ph. D.

Thunder and Lightning. Elihu's description of a thunder storm affords a striking richness of expression for thunder, 36: 29-37: 5. It is, the "crashing of His tent;" "noise," (of God, making him known); "tumult of His voice;" the "growl" or "rumble" that goes from God's mouth. We find also such phrases as, "a voice roareth" (after the lightning); "He roareth with the voice of his sublimity;" and, "God roareth wonderfully with his voice." The din of a multitude, the roar of a lion, and the tumult of the sea, were the sounds to which thunder was comparable. For lightning besides the ordinary word we find "light," (36: 30, 32; 37: 3, 11); "fire of God" (1: 16); the striking phrase, "arrow of (God's) voices." Of the sixteen cases of word and phrase gathered from the poem, all refer to thunder and lightning as God's immediate deed. They are chiefly illustrative of his might and sublimity. The height of imaginative and descriptive power is reached in the passage 36: 29-32, God surrounds himself with light in the depths of his pavilion of cloud, and thence hurls the lightning as a weapon.

" He covereth his hands with the lightning,
And giveth it a charge that it strike the mark."

The 18th Psalm is perhaps the only worthy parallel of this part of Elihu's address.

Snow and Ice are well known to the author, but do not have frequent mention. The melting snow makes the swollen torrent turbid (6: 16); the water from the snow is dried up by the heat (24: 19); snow is thought to be specially cleansing (9: 30). It is kept in store and sent forth by God (37: 6; 38: 22). Ice appears in the parallelism with snow, as blackening the torrent (6: 16); also in two vivid passages in 37: 10, given by the breath of God and narrowing the waters; and in 38: 29, 30, where it is paralleled with the hoar frost, and hides the waters with a solid covering like a stone. The last line of the passage is:

" And the face of the deep is frozen."*

The poet must have experienced, or at least have acquired a definite knowledge of a degree of cold sufficient to congeal the surface of a considerable body of water.

* Lit. "adheres together," Hith. of *lakhadh*, "to catch."

Streams of Water. The uses are largely figurative, affording several most effective similes. There are words for "river," "wady" (*nahal*), used either of the stream, or of its eroded channel or valley, and "watercourse." Nothing could be more true to Oriental scenery than the poet's use of *nahal*. It is a symbol of deceit and disappointment in 6: 15, 18, where Gilbert renders,

" As a brook are my brethren deceitful,
As the bed of vanishing brooks,
The caravans alter their course,
They ascend in the desert and perish."

Also in 22: 24 we have "the stones of the brooks," which in a time of drought become "Hot lanes of glaring stones."* In 40: 22 the "wady" is bordered by willows, and in 20: 17 we have it as a symbol of abundance. Besides standing for perennial streams, the "river" appears in 14: 11 as drying up, a symbol of death, and in 28: 11 referring to subterranean rills stayed by the miner's hand.

" He bindeth the streams from weeping" (Rev. Ver., marg).

Floods were a familiar phenomenon to the poet: Job's roarings are poured out like water (3: 24). He will remember misery as waters that are passed away (11: 16). Terrors overtake the wicked like waters (27: 20), God sends out waters and they overturn the earth (12: 15). Thus we see the inundation rising, doing its work of ruin, and subsiding.

Bodies of Water. These are three; the "ocean" or "inland water," "the moving, sounding sea," "the deep." The ideas of vastness, mystery, agitation and power, suggest that most of the passages have reference to the open sea or ocean, probably the Mediterranean. Thus (7: 12), "Am I a sea?" (restless, needing to be watched); He treadeth upon the waves (heights) of the sea (9: 8). The measure of God's perfection is "broader than the sea" (11: 9); "He quelleth† the sea with his power" (26: 12); "Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? Or hast thou walked in the recesses of the deep?" (38: 16). And perhaps nothing in the poem surpasses the magnificent passage closing with 38: 11, "And

* So, expressively, the writer in Smith's Bib. Dict. Art. *River*.

† So Davidson and others.

here shall thy proud waves be stayed." The passages, 14: 11 and 38: 30, however, refer to inland waters, since such only could be said to dry up, or to be closed with ice. There is no allusion to tides in the poem, as indeed there is none in the Bible.* Its writers had knowledge chiefly, at least, of the Mediterranean, at whose head there is "no appreciable tide,"† or of the Red Sea, whose tides are often imperceptible and always uncertain.‡

Mountains. The common term *har* is used six times in the poem, and one additional passage (26: 11) refers to mountains. We have mountains undergoing convulsions (9: 5, 6), where the suddenness, the shaking, the overturning, point clearly to earthquake phenomena. Mountains are subject to disintegration (14: 18), a symbol of the end of man; they are rooted in the underpart of the earth (28: 9); they are a place of heavy rains (24: 8); and of pasturage (39: 8; 40: 20)§. They are the pillars of heaven, 26: 11, a passage which also alludes to seismic forces. There is one mention of the "hills," as being very ancient (15: 7, cf. Genesis 49: 26).

Rocks, Metals and Gems. We have *'ebhen* as the word for (loose) "stone." It is used in Job, of stones in the field (5: 23); in the soil (8: 17); in the bed of a stream (14: 19); as an emblem of strength (6: 2; 41: 24); of hardness (38: 30); also of the rocks wrought by the miner (28: 2, 3, 6). The term "rock," (*in situ*) is used as proof that even substantial things perish (14: 18); of the stability of the moral order (18: 4); of a permanent place of record (19: 24): of a ledge for shelter (24: 8); as cut through in mining (28: 10); of the stones of a brook (22: 24); and of abundant blessings from unexpected sources (29: 6)||. It will be seen that the use of *'ebhen* in 28: 2, 3, 6, is exceptional to the all but universal usage in the Old Testament. Thus it is the general term for

* See Smith, Bib. Dict. Art. *Sea*.

† Thomson, *The Land and the Book*. Vol. I. p. 70.

‡ Ency. Brit. Vol. XX. p. 316, Art. *Red Sea*.

§ Ruskin quotes the saying of the Savoyards, that the highest pasturages are always the best and richest. *Essay on Mountains*.

|| Thomson, I. 34, refers this passage to the oil presses hewn out of the solid rock.

loose, or movable stones, as memorial monoliths or heaps, well covers, engraved tablets, boulders laid at a cave's mouth, building stones, gems, and weapons of hand or sling. We find the same exception in Genesis 49: 24, "the stone (rock) of Israel." It is probably a poetic use. So also "rock" is used of the loose stones in the brook (22: 24). The other words are: "flint" invaded by the strong and daring hand of the miner, (28: 9); "cavern," furnishing refuge to the poor (30: 6); "cliff," as the home of the eagle and wild goat (39: 1, 28); "crag" with "cliff" in 39: 28, to indicate the projecting point of the cliff.

The metals finding mention in the poem are: "copper" ("brass") in 6: 12; 28: 2,—“And brass is molten out of the stone.” Compare the more literal rendering of Gesenius; “And the stone is poured out (to make) brass.” Also, “iron,” (28: 2) and in implements (19: 24; 20: 24; 40: 18).

Of references to gold and silver, most noteworthy are the exchange of lower for higher treasure, which Eliphaz proposes to Job (22: 24–25); and the allusions in the mining passage (Ch. 28). Thus we have the place of deposit and search (vs. 1), nuggets (“dust”) (vs. 6), and gold of Ophir (vs. 16). The gems of this remarkable chapter, though not all certainly identified, are; Sapphire (vs. 6); onyx (vs. 16); glass (vs. 17); coral, crystal and pearls (or red coral) (vs. 18); and topaz (vs. 19).

The Heavens, Earth, and Under World. We note briefly the correspondence of the poem to the general Hebrew cosmography. The heavens are conceived to be very high (11: 8; 16: 19; 20: 6; 22: 12; 35: 5). They are God's home (16: 19; 22: 12; 22: 14; 35: 5); they are very extended; God sees, sends forth lightnings, and his ownership extends, under the whole heavens (28: 24; 37: 3; 41: 11). The brilliancy of the heavens attracts the eye of the poet (15: 15; 26: 13; 37: 18). As to their mechanism, they are spread out like a great tent (9: 8); they are spherical, referring to their arch or vault (22: 14); they are borne up by pillars (mountains) (26: 11); they are beaten out and strong (37: 18). In the last passage the word is “sky,”—“Canst thou with him spread out (beat out) the sky, which is strong as a molten

mirror?" The allusions to the earth, which have cosmographical significance are as follows. It is very extended: the measure of God's being is longer than the earth (11: 9); the breadth of the earth is difficult to understand (38: 18); as with the heavens, God's vision and lightning messengers reach its utmost bounds. As to the support of the earth, God hangs it upon nothing (26: 7). In like manner with the rain passage (36: 27), the common notion makes the meaning of this passage too modern and scientific. As the northern heavens are stretched out over the waste or void above us, so the earth is suspended upon (from) the same. But the poet has no thought of the earth being without basal support. Jehovah's speech describes it as built upon well laid foundations (38: 4-6); and in 9: 6, it is borne up on pillars which are sometimes shaken.

The under world is very deep (11: 8); it has bars (17: 16), and gates (38: 17); it is beneath the waters and open before God (26: 6), where "destruction" appears with "Sheol." In 28: 22 "Abaddon" and "death" stand together for "Sheol," as personified and disclaiming wisdom. But the chief mark of the under world is its darkness. Thus, 10: 21-22, a passage of remarkable power, in its solemn iteration of the prevailing thought.

"The land of darkness and of the shadow of death :
A land of thick darkness, as darkness itself :
A land of the shadow of death, without any order,
And where the light is as darkness."

The Sun, Moon and Stars. The word sun, in the poem, stands but once for the Hebrew *shemesh*, in 8: 16, where the wicked is like a vigorous plant, "green before the sun." The few remaining allusions afford a poetic variety of expression. God commands the sun (lit. "the heat") not to rise, or scatter rays, referred by some to eclipses or clouds. "I am blackened but not by the sun"* ("heat"), (30: 28). God's "light" rises on all (25: 3). Sun worship is referred to in 31: 26. The dawn brings out the earth into sharp relief (38: 12-14), and appears in the same quarter with the east wind (38: 24). Light is often used of prosperity, and perhaps

* Rev. Ver. marg., and Davidson.

the most familiar symbol of the entire poem is that of darkness for conditions of sorrow and affliction. The moon is named twice (25: 5); also in 31: 26, where Job disclaims its worship, in the fine lines,

" If I saw the light when it shone,
And the moon in majesty moving."*

The star references are, 3: 9; 9: 7; 22: 12; 25: 5; 38: 7; and the sublime passages 9: 9 and 38: 31-32, in which the constellations are summoned to show the creating and ordering power of God.

This study leads us to the following conclusions as to the views of nature held by the poet and by the men of his time.

(1). Everything in nature held a special and immediate relation to God. He was the Maker of all substances and the Agent in all phenomena. If the poet emphasizes the transcendence of God, he does not less emphasize the immanence of God. Of one hundred and eighty passages or allusions examined in the book, one-half explicitly place nature in relation to its Creator and Ruler. This is especially true of those phenomena which are most adapted to stir the imagination of an untutored people,—the clouds, winds, rain, lightning and thunder, the sea, the heavens, and the heavenly bodies. They show the power, wisdom, sovereignty and glory of God. Thus, while we must specially shun the danger of importing modern systematic notions into the devout meditations of an unscientific people, we cannot fail to gain a hint of the unity and pervasiveness of force, in the Hebrew idea of God and nature. But the difference is well put by a recent writer.† "Instead of beginning with multiplicity, and tracing the many up to the one, it (Judaism) began by postulating the one, and tracing its influences down to the many."

(2). The poet had a keen sense of the essential mystery of nature and her operations. It appears in 9: 10-11, "He doeth great things past finding out. He goeth by me and I see him not," the closing passage of a magnificent creation hymn. So also, the last lines of a similar hymn in ch. 26,

* So in Gilbert's "Job."

† Geo. Matheson, D. D., in *The Psalmist and the Scientist*, p. 89.

“ So, these are but the outskirts of his ways ;
 And how small a whisper do we hear of him !
 But the thunder of his power who can understand ? ”

Modern research, intense and profound as it has been, is a like confession of human inability to extract nature's secret.

(3). Although the Hebrew had limited notions of the extent of the universe, he did not fail to learn the lesson of infinity which free nature always teaches her pupils. We note a recent allusion to the “ deep and peculiar enlargement ”* which always comes to dwellers by the sea. The author of Job had in some way verified this, or he could not have so written of the sea, of its broad extent and sounding waves. The height of heaven, the whole heaven, the length of the earth, the breadth of the sea, the depth of sheol, are ideas which forbid us to despise the poet, even though he knew little of the astronomical spaces.

(4). We gain a hint of law. There is a poisoning of masses, a correlation of forces, in the weighing of the wind, the measuring of the water, the decree for the rain, the balancings of the clouds, the ordinances of the heavens. But there is no notion of any chain of causation. God does all things at first hand.

(5). The observational faculty is sympathetic and accurate. As is common with early or with aboriginal peoples, the writer had that sense for nature, which among modern and highly civilized nations, has suffered atrophy except in the poet and the scientist. While there is, of course, absolute absence of scientific theory, there are facts of observation, “ Beobachtungsmateriales,” which carry us up to the fringe of modern doctrines. For example, the notion of a continent continually degraded toward a base-level of erosion is quite recent, but the passage, 14: 18-19, furnishes the dynamics of the entire process.

“ And surely the mountain falling cometh to nought,
 And the rock is removed out of its place.
 The waters wear the stones.†
 The overflowings thereof wash away the dust of the earth.”

* Professor N. S. Shaler in *Nature and Man in America*, Scribner's Magazine, Sept. 1890, p. 363. Similarly Rev. H. H. Peabody, D. D., “ Walt Whitman lived by the sea, and so became the poet of the Infinite.”

† Mutual attrition of rock fragments and erosion of stream bed, though perhaps the poet thought of the smoothing and rounding by the water itself.

Thus we have a complete course of disintegration, erosion, denudation. And further, only the geology of the present century has brought us back to a doctrine which appears everywhere in this poem,—that the earth is passing through ceaseless cycles of change.

(6). We touch upon the poetic character of the passages studied. This should form the subject of a distinct paper, so abundant are the materials.* Briefly then, we find no æsthetic appreciation of natural beauty; grace of outline, variety of forms, purity or richness of color, seem not consciously to have appealed to the poet's eye or feeling. His use of nature is wholly moral,† and in this sphere, his sublimity beggars the noblest criticisms. Nature is a succession of deeds of God; it is also a never failing symbol of man's life. Nearly forty passages thus body forth human experiences. Life dissolves as a cloud; empty speech is wind; calamity is a whirlwind; eager hearts wait for refreshing speech as for rain; dew all night upon the branch, is prosperity; terrors come like floods; trouble is heavy like the sands of the sea, bearing down the spirit. Thus while we miss the more delicate colors and silent voices, we find still in Job, the inmost soul, the sublimest divine heights, the profoundest human depths, of the poetry of nature. Of the single passages in the poem which the lover of nature would find preëminently worthy of attention, we name, 9: 1-10; 26: 6-14: the wisdom passage, including the wonderful picture of the miner's realm, ch. 28; the thunder storm in the speech of Elihu, chs. 36-37; and chs. 38-39 in the speech of Jehovah.

* Professor Gilbert's chapter on this subject is quite full in comparative citations from classic and modern poets.

† Compare Oehler, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 544.